Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (SLCRCP)

Monthly Project Update

March 2016

Location:
Napantao Dive Resort, Napantao, San Francisco, Southern Leyte

Project Scientist: Marie Seraphim, lrcp@coralcay.org

SLRCP Project Aim

The Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project (SLCRCP) is a collaborative project to protect the coral reefs of Sogod Bay, providing training and conservation education opportunities for local Filipinos, as part of an integrated programme to develop local capacity and ensure the long-term protection and sustainable use of marine resources throughout the region. Coral Cay Conservation (CCC) is working at the invitation of and in partnership with the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte and the Philippine Reef & Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc. (PRRCFI). CCC provides the resources to help sustain livelihoods and alleviate poverty through the protection, restoration and management of coral reefs and tropical forests.

Latest News

CCC welcomes Charlotte Hesterman, our new Scuba Instructor

Charlotte has been diving for over 10 years now, becoming a scuba instructor in 2008. As a Facility Manager and Sustainability Consultant, diving is a perfect way for her to unwind and relax. The underwater world is a magical place where she can be at one with nature. After working as a scuba instructor in Thailand, the Caribbean and the Netherlands it was time to get more involved in marine conservation, therefore in 2009 she participated in a marine conservation project in Fiji. This was quickly followed by further projects in the Maldives and Spain. In the last 3 years Charlotte has been the chairwoman of a small NGO called Sea First Foundation, organizing beach clean ups, World Oceans Day events and more. Charlotte’s most recent role has been acting Secretary for another NGO, dedicated to building an artificial reef in Thailand to reproduce and grow corals. Working as a scuba instructor for Coral Cay is the next step in getting more involved in marine conservation.
On the 18th of March CCC Project Scientist Marie Seraphim and Community Liaison Officer Jesse Tinapay attended the Protection Area Management Enhancement (PAME) meeting and planning workshop. The workshop was held at the SLSU Bontoc campus, and hosted by the Provincial Government Department Head Ma’am Eva Abad of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Management Office (PENRMO). Attendees included several focal persons of LGUs Padre Burgos, Limasawa, Liloan, San Francisco and Pintuyan, DENR officials, BFAR officials, and SLSU Bontoc academic staff and researchers.

The aim of the workshop was to discuss priority conservation areas in Sogod Bay and the implementation of 10 potential MPAs within the year 2016. The ultimate goal is to protect and conserve the marine biodiversity of the Bay, which has been identified as one of the Key Biodiversity Areas in the Philippines. During the workshop a Technical Working Group as well as several Committees were formed in which CCC will be participating. A project plan was therefore reviewed and targets were set for the effective establishment of new protected areas. CCC looks forward to the collaboration with PAME project partners on Socio-Economic and Habitat Assessments of those proposed areas.
Education and Community Projects

CCC attends Southern Leyte State University Founding Party

SLSU celebrated its 12th anniversary and CCC was invited to attend. The CCC personnel were well fed, shown the SLSU Bontoc Biology classroom, and entertained by a fusion of modern and traditional dances, all of which had a marine conservation theme to them.

CCC joins the Department of Tourism for a Focused Group Discussion

This month, the Department of Tourism conducted a Focused Group Discussion to draft a National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP). CCC Community Liaison Officer Jesse Tinapay and long term volunteer Mark Hall attended the event as stakeholders in this planning process. During the meeting, CCC offered their expertise on coral reefs and how healthy coral reefs can support tourism and a thriving diving industry.

As the diving in Sogod Bay is out of this world, there is hope that this will lead to increased tourism in the region, generating jobs within the local communities; a key step in the successful management of fisheries and local coastal ecosystems. Increased ecotourism is one of many jigsaw pieces in successful coastal and marine management, with other pieces including better management of the Sogod Bay’s natural resources. With an increased income stream through improved ecotourism, in tandem with an improved holistic approach to the management of natural resources, the hope is that such ecosystems will thrive for many years, sustaining their truly astonishing beauty for future generations whilst enabling local stakeholders to sustainably exploit their resources. Ultimately, sustaining and providing alternative livelihoods.
Survey Monthly Update

Survey background: Since January 2013, survey efforts have been focused on assessing potential and existing Marine Protected Areas in Sogod Bay to provide appropriate management recommendations. To do this CCC uses an expanded version of the Reef Check protocol, which has been customised to perfectly fit our work in Sogod Bay. Prior to this a baseline appraisal of marine resources in Sogod Bay was carried out. If you would like more information about our surveying please contact our Project Scientist, Marie Seraphim.

This month we have been surveying inside and outside Napantao MPA. Every year CCC monitors Napantao house reef twice a year to assess the effectiveness of the MPA.

Scientific reports from all of CCC’s sites around the world are available on our website at http://www.coralcay.org/science-research/scientific-reports

Some of the amazing creatures that we found in Napantao this month
Marine Scholarship News

Each month CCC offers Filipino nationals who display an ambition to study and protect the vital marine ecosystems of the Philippines an opportunity to take part in our Marine Conservation Scholarship. The programme lasts for one month and involves training in SCUBA diving to the level of PADI Advanced Open Water. Scholars then take part in an intensive Skills Development Programme giving them the knowledge and expertise to conduct sub-marine surveys of the coastline.

This month we are introducing our two scholars Zhan Brito and Jai Josol. Zhan has a passion for the ocean and works in tourism and Jai has a Masters in Environment and Climate change.

If you would like to apply for the CCC Marine Conservation Scholarship programme or read more about it, please visit:

http://www.coralcay.org/volunteer/scholarship-opportunities/

“From getting my PADI certification to the Science Program, from the quiz nights to the lovely food Tata cooks for us, and of course to diving one of the best dive spots in the Philippines, my experience with CCC has been nothing short of amazing. I feel very lucky to have been able to experience such program. It has been an honour meeting people from all walks of life who share a common love for the ocean. I will miss everything about it — the people, the activities, the fireflies, the dogs Coral and Shrimp. The base has been one little paradise, what with the amazing coral reefs, the picturesque Sogod Bay, and the billion stars that lit up our nights. I encourage every Filipino who loves and feels strongly about our oceans to apply to the program.”

-Zhan

“I skin dive as a hobby. I applied for the program thinking that it could deepen my passion for conservation and research. I learned how to scuba dive, identify marine species, and did a bit of surveying. The skills and the experience are definitely worth it! I wish it were longer than a month though!

Thank you for your time and cooperation. From all the staff at Coral Cay Conservation we wish you the best of luck for the future!

- Jai

Zhandrez Brito

Jairus Josol
Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project
Philippines, March 2016

Marine Creature of the Month!

CCC’s creature of the month for March is the blue-ringed octopus (*Hapalochlaena* sp.). The blue-ringed octopus is a species that lives in tidal pools and coral reefs in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, from Japan to Australia. It is recognized as one of the world’s most venomous marine animals. Despite its small size, 12 to 20 cm, and relatively docile nature, they are dangerous to humans if provoked and handled, due to their powerful and potentially fatal venom.

They can be identified by their characteristic blue and black rings, and yellowish skin. When the octopus is agitated, the brown patches darken dramatically, iridescent blue rings, or clumps of rings, appear and pulsate. Typically, 50–60 blue rings cover the dorsal and lateral surfaces of the mantle. They hunt small crabs, hermit crabs, and shrimp.

A blue ringed octopus was recently spotted in Napantao house reef, a rare treat for our volunteers!

Learn More!

To learn more about the CCC Philippines project, to join the expedition, or to find out about local marine scholarships, visit www.coralcay.org.